

# The THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

BULLETIN 177 US ISSN 0040-6406 FALL 1986

## A NEW THOREAU LETTER, by Raymond R. Borst

On 10 April 1916 F.B. Sanborn wrote to Francis Allen telling him that Thoreau was appointed to the Harvard College Committee for Examination in Natural History for the years 1858, 1859 and 1860.<sup>1</sup> None of the notices of these appointments have surfaced until now. A copy of a form letter dated 28 March 1859 to Thoreau advising him of his appointment has been discovered in the Parkman Dexter Howe collection of New England authors acquired by the University of Florida through the efforts of its rare book librarian, Sidney Ives.<sup>2</sup> Thoreau apparently did not note this appointment in his journal nor is there evidence that he attended any meetings of the committee. A copy of the letter follows:

### HARVARD COLLEGE.

Cambridge, March 28, 1859.

Sir:—

I transmit to you herewith the subjoined copy of a Report made to the Board of Overseers, and accepted by that body.

You will perceive your name in the list of the Committees, and you will be pleased to consider this communication as a notice of your appointment as a member of the Committee in which your name occurs.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES WALKER, President.

## Committees of Examination.

The Committee appointed to nominate Committees for visiting the College, and conducting its examinations for the current year, having agreed on the selections, submit the following Report:—

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The Secretary of the Board of Education,  
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The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and admirers of Henry David Thoreau. Michael Meyer, president; Mary Anderson, treasurer; and Walter Harding, secretary. Address communications to the secretary at State University College, Geneseo, N.Y., 14454. Dues: Students, \$10; Regular members, \$20; Family Membership, \$35; Benefactor's Membership; Life Membership, \$500. Dues should be sent to the Thoreau Society, 156 Belknap St., Concord, Mass. 01742. The society also sponsors the Thoreau Lyceum at that address.

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Attest,

NATHANIEL B. SHURTLEFF, Secretary of the Overseers.

March 18, 1859.

1. Walter Harding. "Two F.B. Sanborn Letters." *American Literature* 25 (May 1953): 230-231.
2. Raymond R. Borst. *The Parkmen Dexter Library: Part II. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida, 1984, pp. 13-14.*

# FURTHER RESPONSES TO THOREAU'S WORCESTER LECTURES AND A REVIEW OF "WALDEN", by Kent P. Ljungquist

Starting on April 20, 1849, Thoreau lectured regularly in Worcester, Massachusetts, most of his appearances sponsored by his friend H.G.O. Blake. Although several generally positive reviews of these local lectures have been previously recorded,<sup>1</sup> other critiques in the Worcester newspapers provide a fuller, and more mixed, account of Thoreau's reception. Three responses in early May, 1849, in particular, may have contributed to a pattern of negative national publicity for Thoreau that was surfacing at the time.<sup>2</sup>

In the Worcester *Palladium* of May 2, 1849, a review entitled "Lake Philosophy" scored Thoreau for eccentricity and oddity:

## Lake Philosophy

The "Walden Pond" philosopher, (Mr. Thoreau, of Concord,) delivered his second lecture at Brinley Hall Friday evening. It was a continuation of his history of two years of "life in the woods;" a mingled web of sage conclusions and puerility--wit and egotistical effusions--bright scintillations and narrow criticisms and low comparisons. He has a natural poetic temperament, with a more than ordinary sensibility to the myriad of nature's manifestations. But there is apparent a

constant struggle for eccentricity. It is only when the lecturer seems to forget himself, that the listener forgets that there is in the neighborhood of "Walden Pond" another philosopher [Emerson] whose light Thoreau reflects; the same service which the moon performs for the sun. Yet the lecturer says many things that not only amuse the hour, but will not be easily forgotten. He is truly one of nature's oddities; and would make a very respectable Diogenes, if the world were going to live its life over again, and that distinguished citizen of antiquity should not care to appear upon the stage.

Bulwer puts in to the mouth of his Mr. Augustine Caxton a theory which may elucidate some of the mysteries of human character. It is thus:--

"The earth, according to Apuleius, (in his treatise on the philosophy of Plato,) was produced from right-angled triangles; but fire and air from the scalene triangle; the angles of which, I need not say, are very different from those of a right-angled triangle. Now I think there are people in the world of whom one can only judge rightly according to those mathematical principles applied to their original construction; for if air or fire predominates in our natures, we are scalene triangles; if earth, right-angled triangles. He who is a scalene triangle, must be judged accordingly upon irregular, lopsided principles; whereas others, commonplace mortals, are produced, like the earth, which is their preponderating element, with their triangles all right angles, comfortable and complete;--for which blessing let them thank Providence, and be charitable to those who are necessarily windy and gaseous, from that unlucky scalene triangle upon which they have had the misfortune to be constructed."

We make no application of this ingenious apology for the eccentricities of a portion of the race.

In the wake of Emerson's appearances in Worcester earlier in the spring, a reviewer in the May 3, 1849 Worcester *Daily Spy* also found Thoreau's lectures derivative, but applied other charges:

## THOREAU'S LECTURES

The third lecture of this course will be given at Brinley Hall, this evening. Being absent from town on the evening when the first lecture was given, we did not have the good fortune to hear it--a circumstance we regretted, because the commendations we heard of it assure us that it would have been a source of enjoyment to us. Those commendations had possibly led us to expect too much, and we are free to say, that in hearing the second lecture, we were disappointed. We had looked for a bold, original thinker, who would give us the results of his observations and reflections, with a vigor, freshness, and independence, which would win our respect and admiration, even though it might not



convince us. We said that we were disappointed. This lecturer evidently is not deficient in ability, and might very probably attain to more than a respectable rank, if he were satisfied to be himself, Henry D. Thoreau, and not aim to be Ralph Waldo Emerson or any body else. But, so far as manner, at least was concerned, the lecture was a better imitation of Emerson than we should have thought possible, even with two year's seclusion to practice in. In the ideas, too, there was less of originality than we had looked for, and recollections of Carlyle as well as Emerson, were repeatedly forced upon the mind. The style was mostly Emersonian, with occasional interludes, in which the lecturer gave us glimpses of himself beneath the panoply in which he was enshrouded, and we are perverse enough to confess ourselves better pleased with him as Thoreau than as Emerson, so far as these opportunities afforded us the means of judging.

We are no admirers of the cynicism, whether real or affected, of the school to which we suppose the lecturer belongs. It strikes us that one who is capable of such high enjoyments, as they sometimes profess, from the contemplation of the works of creation in their lower manifestations, might, if his mind were rightly constituted, find increased pleasure in communion with the last, best, and highest subject of creative power, even though in most individual cases, it may fail to come up to the standard for which it was designed.

The lecturer stated that he never had more than three letters that were worth postage. That might possibly be accounted for by his limited correspondence, or by the character of his correspondents, or even by the relative estimate which he may put upon the amount of the root of evil which is required to pay the postage of a letter. At any rate, there is one consolation for him in the case--that probably another year will not pass away without a reduction in the rates of letter postage.

We hope our readers will go to the lecture, this evening, and hear for themselves. We would not miss of going on any consideration of an ordinary character. We are to have, among other things, the lecturer's experience, during his two years' seclusion from the world, in raising beans! Farmers and horticulturists will probably be elevated upon the philosophical influence of that avocation.

A more vigorous attack appeared in the May 9, 1849 Worcester Daily Spy. A correspondent referred to as "Z", a youthful member of Worcester's "sofa lolling literati," proudly proclaimed his desire to return to superficialities:

Henry D. Thoreau of Concord had better go home and ask his mother if she "knows he's out." Doubtless she, (Nature) will say she missed him who is the soul of Walden. Be satisfied, Thoreau, to be the

soul of Walden-wood. To be frank with you, you are better as a woodman, or say a woodpecker, than as a cockney philosopher, or a city parrot, mimicking the voices of canaries or cat owls, of Emerson, or Carlyles--or I beseech you if you must sing in cities, to warble only your "native wood notes wild." And here a hint about the genteel lecture going world--come down from our place of instruction; they gather not before you to be instructed but to be amused; they come not to hear corroborating voice, surging them to penetrate to the reality of things; they want no new or better philosophy; but they are willing to have their sluggish intellects stirred up as with a long pole by some novelty. But look to it that there is novelty. Bring forth your new fangled Nondescript into the arena, plunge spears into his side rowel deep, and with the speed of wind circle the ten years space, say twice, and vanish, behind the curtain while applause takes people's eyes from you to each other, exultingly. Some then shall swear, you soared through the roof dragon-like, others shall magnify you into the very Job's Unicorn! But stay, till your Nondescript has shown all his few graces, and in spite of spurs waddles heavy round the arena, weary people grow disgusted, and begin to look for the seams of his sheepskin covering; till the most moderate begin to mutter, good as a horse but poor as a Nondescript, while the immoderate, (which most are) cry--poor, and because poor, useless, turned to a Nondescript, if so be it might pay its way to Humbug.

Therefore, Mr. Thoreau, henceforward I warn you to quit the arena while the novelty is on, for if your audience becomes fatigued, rely upon it they will find sheep skin seams, though you were a genuine original woolen horse from the Rocky Mountains. But to specialize, my dear Thoreau, how dared you seem to think like Emerson, how could you draw similar inferences, inspirations from your intercourse with Nature, to those of Emerson. Does Nature mean the same thing to any two persons? Impossible! We, the Worcester sofa lolling literati think that she would be more original.

Thoreau, the youth who writes this has implicit faith in your power of drawing inspirations from nature, in your thorough enjoyment of "Forest Life," in your ear for the eternal melodies that nature sounds forever, for the inner soul's tympanum, if we will but remove the cotton wadding which deadens and excludes them. But he has not faith in your ability to become an effective prophet and priest of this true worship, of the divine Nature, of the simply true you found us, (some dozens) clogged with custom, with the aggregated results of human contact, which may have been forced down to us, and upon us, through the centuries: for a moment as you came before us there seemed a glimpse

to open (out of those clogging "clothes," Carlyle, you know) into a lovely forest-land, where dwelt primitive simplicity, with the purest culture, intellectual and practical.

Ah, Thoreau, if you had left us with that hint, that one, it had been a suggestion to the advantage of our souls. But after, the crowd says (that is the same dozens say) that you winged but a stupid flight, on wings of Carlyle, or Emerson, through formless mist-clouds or smoke of burning brush-heaps, where snapped and crackled, wit or nonsense, as the case might be, and I am certain that you dropped us amid diagrams on Walden pond, upon that patch of cleared ground, barren to my apprehension of witty product, your Bean field-- As Thoreau, I've got the blues this morning. How is transcendentalism chop fallen. Simplicity, rurality is a drug in the market. Mechanism exults in the clank of machinery, on every back street mocks the mortified poet-philosopher. Routine triumphs; fine houses and furniture put on an elegantly impudent aspect; a philosopher having flattened out, philosophy may step into the back-ground. We return with new zest to the "surface of things" and idly float on it our light pleasure gondola not diving again for pearl-oysters in the next six months, I warrant me.<sup>3</sup> Z.

Taking up the issue of oddity on the lecture platform, a review of Walden in the "New Books" column of the August 16, 1854 Worcester Palladium found that the excellence of Thoreau's masterpiece outweighed his possible deficiencies as a public speaker:

WALDEN: or Life in the Woods. By Henry D. Thoreau, author of "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers." Boston: Ticknor and Fields.

We do not suppose any of our readers need be informed who Thoreau is; but if any are ignorant of his name or existence, this book will be their best introduction. Looked upon as one of the Concord oddities, as a wayward genius, many have smiled and turned away their heads as they would at a clown who for a moment might make them stare and laugh, but leave them no wiser in the end. A few interested themselves in the Walden philosopher, amused with his quaintness, struck with the sense of some of his philosophy, and pleased with his originality. Almost the only opportunity he has given the public to become acquainted with him, has been through the medium of lectures. These will be eclipsed in popularity by the book which has many decided advantages over the lectures. A man can write about himself with better effect than he can talk about himself. The pen is a more modest communicator than the tongue, and is not so easily charged egotism.

Walden is a prose poem. It has classical elegance, and New England homeliness, with a sparkle of Oriental magnificence in it. It is a book to be read

and re-read, and read again, until another is written like it; so great is the popular tendency toward artificialities. It can not be complained against the book that it is not practical in its theories. Does not its author tell us of every board that built his house? Also the cost of the laths, the windows, the chimney, and the food he eats? He shows us that life is too hard work now-a-days; that it grows harder and more perplexing the farther it advances from primitive simplicity. With portions of the volume the public are familiar, but the whole of it is well worth being acquainted with. Our readers will find extracts from it on our first page. Elegantly published in a neat and convenient form, it is for sale at Livermore's.

"Extracts from Walden," entitled "Walden Ice" and "Emerson and Alcott As Visitors to Thoreau's Hut," appeared in the same issue, with an introductory statement: "From Thoreau's new work, just published by Ticknor & Fields, we take the following extracts."

In the January 17, 1855 Palladium, Stella, a regular commentator on the local cultural scene in a series of "Suburban Letters," used Thoreau's January 4 lecture as a stimulus for amplification on his discussion of the value of newspapers:<sup>4</sup>

Suburban Letters. No. 113  
Sycamore House, Jan. 15, 1855

Thoreau, in his recent lecture before the Lyceum, said that he had but one newspaper, and that it took him a whole week to read that. It is very amusing, to see people searching high and low for some bit of poetry, some choice tale, article or paragraph, which to your certain knowledge, laid on their own table and before their eyes, perhaps not a week ago. People generally only skim their daily or weekly journals. They catch up a paper, run their eyes over the columns, gather up the sweetmeats, and form their opinions of the merits or demerits of the journal from the quantity of these little morsels. More particularly is this the case with lady readers. They first attack the marriages and deaths, then the advertisements of "rare bargains," glance around for an "elopement," or "shocking casualty," take a peep at the editorial leader, pronounce it a bore, then say they have "read the paper." Everybody should have a paper which they can read thoroughly, one in which they are sure nothing will be printed which is not worth perusal. No independent man will take a paper whose management he knows to be bad, with merely the excuse that he cannot do better. In proportion to the trash that floods the country under the name of newspapers there is comparatively little that is really good. Yet there are such papers, and they should be supported and read, in preference to those--and a very large number they make, who force themselves upon a public which has not the courage to shake them off.

The article concludes with miscellaneous comments on local cultural activities.  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute



## NOTES

1. See Ruth Frost, "Thoreau's Worcester Visits," Nature Outlook, 1 (1943), 9-15 and Hubert H. Hoeltje, "Thoreau as Lecturer," New England Quarterly, 19 (1946), 485-474.
2. Kenneth Walter Cameron, "Damning National Publicity for Thoreau in 1849," American Transcendental Quarterly, No. 1, (Second Quarter 1969), 18-27.
3. Another comment on Thoreau appeared in the Daily Spy at the end of the year. Responding to the December 1849 issue of the Massachusetts Quarterly Review containing Lowell's review of Thoreau's Week, the editors briefly noted: "we have had time, yet, to look it over but a little, but we have found the second article, a very amusing one, as might be expected from J. Russell Lowell, when reviewing Thoreau!" (Worcester Daily Spy, December 6, 1849).
4. The lecture was "What Shall It Profit?" as discussed by Bradley F. Dean, "Another Review of What Shall It Profit?" Thoreau Society Bulletin, No. 169 (1984), 7-8.

## ADDITIONS TO THE THOREAU BIBLIOGRAPHY...WH

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- CONCORD JOURNAL. "Fencing in Walden's Future." July 3, 1986. Editorial on protection of the pond.
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- Nocera, Gigliola. "Henry David Thoreau e il neo-transcendentalismo di John Cage." LE FORME E LA STORIA, 4 (1983), 83-115.
- Palches, Lois Grant. "Thoreau's Walden a Symbol of Timeless Need to Retreat to Simplicity." CONCORD JOURNAL. August 7, 1986.
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- Putnam, Constance E. "Walden Forever, For Everyone." CONCORD JOURNAL. Sept. 4, 1986.
- Richardson, Robert D. Jr. HENRY THOREAU: A LIFE OF THE MIND. Berkeley: Univ. of Calif., 1986. 455pp. \$25. This is an intellectual biography of Thoreau from 1837, when he was twenty and finishing college, to his death in 1862. It is a book long needed. I recall a conversation with Odell Shepard at the first meeting of the Thoreau Society in 1941 when we both agreed it was the most needed book in the field of Thoreau studies. (Shepard himself intended to do it, but never got around to it.) Now that it is here, it has been worth waiting for. I suspect it is the Thoreau book of this decade. And I suspect that it will be widely read for many years to come.
- It discusses not only the impact of his reading on Thoreau, but that also of his friends and acquaintances, from the Greek classics to Darwin, from Emerson to John Brown. It could be written only by someone who has a strong background in all the schools of literature with which Thoreau was acquainted, but who has also read most of the forgotten

and often quirky books that Thoreau, omnivorous reader that he was, had for one reason or another read. How Richardson managed to get hold of and read so many of these I'll never know. But thanks to this assiduity, he achieves an outstandingly comprehensive picture of the development of Thoreau's thought over the years. Particularly notable are the pages on the impact of Darwin and Agassiz on Thoreau and those on the early relationship of Emerson and Thoreau.

The book is written with eminent good sense. His judgments are superb; his comments, enlightening. He catches well Thoreau's intensity and joy of life. What is more, the book is beautifully designed and printed, with illustrations by Barry Moser. If you are at all interested in Thoreau's intellectual life, don't miss this book.

----- The Same. Reviews: CHICAGO TRIBUNE, Sept. 4, 1986; BOSTON GLOBE, Sept. 2, 1986; CONCORD JOURNAL, Sept. 11, 1986.

Seeley, Robert A. "Thoreau, Henry David" THE HANDBOOK OF NON-VIOLENCE. Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1986. pp. 300-301.

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Thoreau, Henry David. DESOBEDECENDO: A DESOBEDIENCIA CIVIL & OTHER ESSAYS. Trans. into Portuguese by José Augusto Drummond. San Paulo, Brazil: Circulo Do Livro, 1986. 210pp. A new edition.

----- "Laying up for Winter," CUISINE, 13 (Nov. 1984), 20. Excerpts from WALDEN.

----- WALDEN OR LIFE IN THE WOODS. Trans. into Russian. Moscow, 1986. Bound with Emerson's ESSAYS, pp. 385-614.

----- WALDEN OU LA VIE DANS LES BOIS. Trans. into French by Jeanne Chantal and Thierry Fournier. Lausanne, Switzerland: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1985. "This new translation is very pleasant and easy to read, and one can sense that the translators have grasped the spirit of Thoreau. Certain passages are very beautiful and on the whole, it does justice to Thoreau's style. So we have at last a good translation of WALDEN."--Gilles Farce.

Ziff, Larzer. "Puritanism and Romanticism," RIVISTA DI STUDI ANGLO-AMERICANA, 2-3 (1984), 68-79. Compares Thoreau, Bartram, and Edwards.

We are indebted to the following for submitting material to use in the bulletin: T. Blanding, W. Bottorff, B. Dean, G. Farcé, M. Fischette, W. Glick, R. Calvin, P. Huber, E. Hunsaker, E. Jacobson, E. Johnson, P. Johnson, J. Lowe, C. Mathews, P. Neuröter, C. Orr, N. Pokrovsky, E. Schofield, M. Sperber, P. Williams, J. Zuthoff, and A. Zwinger. Please keep the secretary informed of items he has missed and new ones as they appear.

"THE INFLUENCE OF HINDU SCRIPTURES ON THE WRITINGS OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU": Abstract of a Doctoral dissertation at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, India, by Shrinibas Tripathy.

This dissertation aims at making a fresh re-appraisal of the influence of Hindu scriptures on Henry David Thoreau. The major premise of the present study is that the influence of Hindu scriptures, in range and magnitude, constitutes, one of the most important influences on him. The influence of Hindu scriptures is discernible on the Journals, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Walden, travel books, essays, and other miscellaneous writings. I have attempted here to point out that Hindu scriptures have not only influenced Thoreau's ideas and style of writing, they have also affected his lifestyle and his conduct in society. I have tried to place Thoreau's interest in Hindu scriptures in the context of the cultural renaissance of his time when enthusiasm for Indian texts was strong in America.

Chapter I which is an introduction to Thoreau's speciality as man, writer and thinker suggests that Thoreau's whole life was an experiment with good living the attainment of which was made possible by Thoreau's reading of Hindu texts. The chapter also examines the various critics who have discussed Thoreau in light of his affinity with India. My argument centres round Thoreau's familiarity with a few Hindu concepts and the influence of Hindu idealism on his three major acts: the writing of A Week, his solitary living in the woods, and his refusal to pay taxes.

Chapter II examines the history of cultural contacts between India and America from the time of Columbus to Transcendentalism in order to see Thoreau's interest in Hindu scriptures from proper perspective. The activities of some eminent thinkers like Cotton Mather, Jefferson, Thompson and Bryant and of the traders and missionaries paved the way for a fuller understanding between India and America.

The third Chapter discusses how Thoreau began his study of Hindu scriptures prior to and during his stay at Emerson's house. I have attempted to analyse his Journal entries to ascertain the points in Hindu scriptures which attracted Thoreau most at the preliminary stage of his career.

In Chapter IV I have examined A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers in the light of the Gita. The Gita has tremendously influenced A Week in its structure, design, situations, characters, and chapter arrangements.

Chapter V analyses Thoreau's attraction toward the Hindu way of life prescribed in the Laws of Manu. It also examines Thoreau's Walden experiment in the light of the life suggested in the Laws and concludes that Thoreau's simple life, his study of scriptures, his love of solitude, his practice of meditation, his vegetarianism and his love for animals conform to a Brahminical pattern of life laid down in the Laws of Manu. Even a concept like civil disobedience is influenced by Hindu scriptures.

Chapter VI is concerned with Thoreau's continued interest in Hindu scriptures until his death. It examines his later writings like the Journals, The Maine Woods, Cape Cod etc., and suggests that though his references to Hindu writings are few in his later works, his absorption into the Hindu philosophy is deeper.

In Conclusion, I have summed up my earlier arguments and have built a thesis that Thoreau's



affinity with India took place in three distinct stages: through the Gita which shaped the structure of A Week; through the Laws of Manu which suggested the way of life at Walden; and through total absorption of the fundamentals of Hindu life and thought marked in his later writing.

REMINISCENCES OF THOREAU  
by Bronson Alcott

A correspondent of "The Springfield Republican," in an account of a visit to Concord, thus reports Mr. Alcott - picture of Thoreau: -

He was a virgin man. All his instincts and thoughts were fresh and pure as those of a babe. He seemed to have no temptations. All those strong wants which do battle with other men's natures he knew not. Only once in my life did I ever see him in company when he seemed to recognize any difference between a woman and himself. He believed animals' instincts were of the same kind as man's senses, only that man's were of greater degree, and he always curiously noted where those instincts of the animal approached nearest to those of man, he seemed to have four or five more instincts than any other man. The flowers waited for him to come and see them blossom; for it was impossible to escape him by a single hour. It seemed as if I could say with truth that he knew familiarly every atom of earth in Concord. He walked every morning, and returning to his cabin, wrote down simply what he saw, just as he saw it. His journals, still unprinted, will make fifteen or twenty volumes. He was of a social nature, but never came to see me unless he had something to say, and always pinned one to his subject. Small in stature, and dapper in appearance, he seemed to cling to the earth as he walked along. But he had strong muscular hands, and limbs clad in hair. His eyes were wonderful: they seemed to see behind him - to see round the corner of himself, to comprehend everything. He saw things instantly in nature which were close to us all, but which none of us others ever see. His nostrils were superb, and he snuffed the air like an animal, as if he distinguished as well by scent as by sight. - Radical, V (June, 1869), 523

CYNTHIA AND SOPHIA THOREAU  
by Irving Allen

"Thoreau's mother and sister were dear friends of my youth and early manhood. . .

Mrs. Thoreau was in many respects a very remarkable woman; the most prolific, and, I think, the most interesting talker I ever met. Her fund of anecdote and reminiscences was amazing and unending; her command of the formidable female weapon of sarcastic rejoinder entirely worthy of the object of her especial and enthusiastic admiration, Wendell Phillips. . .

"Sophia, the daughter, was of widely different temperament and nature. She had much of her mother's sarcastic power, with scarcely any of the vivacity so characteristic of Cynthia Thoreau. In certain respects there was a striking resemblance between Sophia and Henry - not physically, for they looked scarcely at all alike, but in a certain weight and gravity of thought and utterances. In neither of them was there much to remind one of the French extraction of the father, John Thoreau, amiable and most lovable old gentleman, by far too honest, and scarcely sufficiently energetic

for this exacting yet not over scrupulous world of ours." "American Women To Whom the World is Indebted.: Independent, XLVII (July 25, 189), 988.

ANOTHER EARLY REVIEW OF A WEEK

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack River, by Henry D. Thoreau, is a rare work in American literature. Some people have compared it with Emerson's essays, but the only points of resemblance between Emerson and Thoreau, that we have discovered, are that they are both par in their philosophy, both are ardent lovers of nature, both follow out their own instincts, and both are residents of the town of Concord. In style and habits of thought they are quite unlike, and we think that Mr. Thoreau may be safely judged, in reference to his own merits, without comparing his name with Emerson's. It is a remarkable fact, that the little village of Concord should be able to boast of three such writers as Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne (sic), and Henry D. Thoreau. Mr. Thoreau's book is published in a very neat and tasteful manner by Munroe and Co., of Boston. We advise our readers to peruse it. It is full of fine thoughts and pleasant descriptions of Nature.

Holden's Dollar Magazine, IV (July, 1849), 448

THE THOREAU SOCIETY MLA MEETING . . .

The Thoreau Society will sponsor two sessions at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association in New York City in late December, 1986. Both will be on Sunday Dec. 28 in the Marriott Hotel. At 10:15 in the Sullivan Room, Joel Myerson will chair a session on "1836: The Annus Mirabilis 150 Years Later" with Len Gougeon speaking on Emerson; Guy Woodall, on William Henry Furness; Robert Habich on Orestes Brownson; Larry Carlson on Bronson Alcott; and Robert Richardson, on Thoreau.

At 1:45 p.m. in the Skylobby 23 room, Michael Meyer will chair a session on "Thoreau's Journal as Life and Art" with Mark Patterson speaking on "The Literary History of Thoreau's Journal"; Robert Sattelmeyer on "Friendship in Crisis: Thoreau and Emerson in the Unpublished Journal of 1849-50"; and William Rossi on "Walking, Writing and WALDEN." Unfortunately sessions are open only to members of the MLA.

AN OBITUARY OF THOREAU'S FATHER . . .

Pasted into a scrapbook that once belonged to Thoreau's sister Sophia and now in the possession of Professor Raymond Adams of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is a newspaper clipping, its source unrecorded, though probably from one of the many anti-slavery newspapers of the time. Although it records his death as of February 4, 1859, someone, probably Sophia Thoreau, has corrected it in pencil to read February 3rd. The Furness mentioned is undoubtedly William Henry Furness, a Unitarian minister in Philadelphia and close friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson;

Died--in Concord, Feb 4th, John Thoreau, Esq., aged 71 years.

Mr. Thoreau has, for many years, been known among us as a man of great integrity of character. He was called by all who knew him, emphatically, an honest man. So quiet and unpretending was he, that few but those most intimately acquainted with him knew of those deep fountains of humanity which were constantly welling up in his soul. It was this which made him an Abolitionist. His heart was touched for the mighty wrongs of the slave, and his soul deeply interested for his redemption. For years he absented himself from the Church, on account of its wicked complicity with slavery. Though oftentimes voting with the Republican party, yet with his whole soul he honored those men, who, for so long a time, have, with clean hands and sturdy uprightness, carried the ark of the covenant through the tangle-weeds, the briars and thorns which grew so abundantly in the great wilderness of Church and State. His friends will not soon forget his pleasant smile, his cordial grasp of the hand, and the hearty hospitality with which he greeted the lovers of humanity. If, in the language of Furness, 'he who but touches the hem of the garment of Anti-Slavery has found salvation,' then has he gone to join the glorious throng of those who have, from age to age, made the redemption of man the great object for which they lived, and for which so many have offered up their lives, and he will forever find his own redemption and joy in the redemption of all who are, and shall be, in all coming time, waiting to be redeemed from the power of ignorance and sin. For the Lord 'knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever.'

#### NOTES AND QUERIES . . .

Keene State College in Keene, N.H. sponsored an exhibition of Thoreau watercolors by Tony Foster and of Thoreau photographs by Eliot Porter in their Thorne-Sagendorph Gallery in September and October. The exhibition was accompanied by a series of lectures on Thoreau by Richard Lebeaux, John Conron and others.

Although a George Emerson in E.M. Forster's 1908 novel *A ROOM WITH A VIEW* displays a sign saying "Beware of enterprizes that require new clothes, it is only the 1986 movie version of the novel that acknowledges the words are from Thoreau.

Article 13 in the 1986 Lincoln, Mass. town warrant proposes changing the name of Sandy Pond back to Flint's Pond. It is interesting to note that though it was originally Flint's Pond, it was changed to Forest Lake in 1856, two years after Thoreau commented in *WALDEN* about the "Skin-Flints" who would not let him build his cabin on their pond. It was changed again to Sandy Pond about forty years later. Now it is once again Flint's Pond.

A billboard in Dalls, Texas, advertises Chuck's Fried Chicken: "March to a different drumstick."

Advertisements for SHAMAN'S DRUM, "a journal of experiential Shamanism," say, "Treat yourself to the beat of a very different drum."

According to Joel Myerson, the NEW YORK

DAILY TRIBUNE for January 25, 1844 includes lengthy quotations from a Thoreau lecture.

Jim Dawson of Trappe, Md., has recently acquired a first edition of *WALDEN* autographed by George B. Bartlett, the author of various Concord guide books, and by E.J. Bartlett, apparently the young Edward Bartlett who used to bring Thoreau various nature specimens. On the inside front endpaper is the label of A. Stacy, the Concord bookseller. Jim points out that Stacy is not listed among the booksellers ordering copies of *WALDEN* from Ticknor & Fields (*THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN* 117) in its first year of publication and wonders when Stacy started stocking it and if there are any other known copies of the first edition that indicate that they were sold in a Concord bookstore.

After several years of negotiation, the Concord Board of Appeals has finally granted permission to the Thoreau Lyceum to erect a sign on its lawn to indicate its location.

We understand that Nikita Pokrovsky's recent Russian biography of Thoreau already has 60,000 copies in print.

A new detective story by Roy Lewis has the title *A TROUT IN THE MILK*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1986.

In 1906 Houghton Mifflin issued 200 specially bound sets of the *Walden Edition* with pieces of Thoreau manuscript tipped in (this was in addition to the 600 copies of the *Manuscript Edition*). Brad Dean asks if there were any of these specially bound sets that did not contain a piece of manuscript?

According to the *CONCORD JOURNAL* for Aug. 28, 1986, the Walden Pond State Reservation is expending \$263,000 on constructing a thousand feet of new path on the south side of Walden Pond below the railroad to prevent erosion.

A new real estate development outside Atlanta, Georgia, is named Walden and features houses at \$179,900 and up. They advertise: "Simplify your life and slip away to Walden--where nature is waiting just outside your door."

The Christmas 1986 catalog of the Horchow Collection features a two-inch enamel box with Thoreau's "different drummer" quotation on the cover for \$190.00. "Simplify! simplify!"

Ray Welch has recently pointed out to us that when HDT in his journal for July 19, 1858 (XI,55) listed equipment to take on a mountain climbing expedition, he completely forgot to list any kind of trousers!

Lillian Files, the "bluebird lady" of Tyngsboro, Mass., has published a bluebird greeting card with a quotation from Thoreau.

According to the manuscript now in the Harvard College Library, Margaret Fuller wrote her younger brother Richard on May 25, 1841 about Thoreau, "He has a great deal of practical sense and as he has bodily strength to boot he may look to be a successful and happy man."

If you are currently a secondary school teacher in the United States and would be interested in attending a six-week seminar next summer sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities in Concord, Mass., studying Thoreau, Hawthorne and Emerson on a fellowship, write your secretary, Walter Harding, NEH Seminar, SUNY, Geneseo, N.Y. 14454 for details.